PRESS RELEASE

Ombudsman probes Government's planning and arrangements for ancillary facilities for electric private vehicles

The Ombudsman, Ms Connie Lau, today (September 28) declared a direct investigation into the Government's planning and arrangements for ancillary facilities for electric private vehicles to examine whether there are any improprieties.

Since April 1994, the Government has waived the first registration tax for electric vehicles (EVs) in order to encourage the use of EVs with the aim of reducing roadside air pollution. The Steering Committee on the Promotion of Electric Vehicles headed by the Financial Secretary was set up in April 2009 to recommend a strategy with specific complementary measures to promote the use of EVs.

In this regard, the 2009-10 Policy Address clearly stated that it was Government's policy objective to make Hong Kong one of the cities in Asia where EVs are most widely used. The 2009-10 Budget indicated that the Government would examine the feasibility of providing recharging facilities in government multi-storey car parks and explore ways of encouraging the business sector to set up such facilities. In May 2011, the Government revised the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, setting out its longer term target as the following: 30 per cent of private cars would be EVs or hybrids by 2020, while 30 per cent of the private car parking spaces in new buildings would have recharging facilities installed.

Given the Government's encouragement, Hong Kong saw rapid growth in the number of electric private vehicles. The number of registered electric private vehicles surged from 69 in April 2011 to 10,588 in April 2017, representing a sharp increase of 152 times. Nevertheless, the provision of ancillary recharging facilities has not shown corresponding growth. According to statistics provided by the Environment Protection Department, the number of public recharging facilities increased from 872 in 2011 to 1,518 in 2016, which was not even double.

Ms Lau said, "The Government's policy objective is to make Hong Kong one of the cities in Asia where EVs are most widely used. While the number of electric private vehicles has increased rapidly following the Government's encouragement, the provision of public rechargers has failed to keep pace with such growth and this has attracted a lot of criticism. This not only caused inconvenience to electric private vehicle owners but also, contrary to the intent of government policy, impeded the wider use of EVs in Hong Kong. Furthermore, as the Government has in its policy documents openly given its support for promoting the use of EVs, it is only natural for members of the public to have a reasonable expectation of the Government to plan and arrange for more ancillary facilities. Our direct investigation will explore in depth whether the Government's planning and arrangements for ancillary facilities is in line with its policy on promoting the use of EVs."

The Environment Bureau is the leading policy bureau responsible for promoting the use of EVs and so it is the subject of this direct investigation. The ambit of the investigation will cover:

(1) details of the Government's policy on promoting the use of EVs;

(2) the Government's planning and arrangements for ancillary facilities for electric private vehicles; and

(3) any areas for improvement and enhancement.

The Ombudsman is now inviting views from members of the public. Views in writing should reach the Office of The Ombudsman by **October 30, 2017**:

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Office of The Ombudsman
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